

Grande Valley businessman, Baldomero Vela Sr., who passed away on Friday, June 2, 2017.

Baldomero, or “Baldo,” as he was known to friends and family, was born and raised in Hidalgo, Texas. After graduating from McAllen High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1944, serving in the 29th Infantry Division during World War II. He then attended the University of Texas at Austin, graduating in 1949 with a degree in pharmaceuticals.

Following graduation, Baldo was a pharmacist for 50 years in the Rio Grande Valley. In 1957, Baldo opened the Professional Pharmacy in McAllen, Texas. In the 1970s, he purchased Lee's Pharmacy, which is now owned and operated by two of his five children. In addition to his role as a pharmacist, Baldo was deeply involved in a number of community organizations, including the Hidalgo Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, McAllen Public Utilities Board and McAllen Housing Services.

Baldomero will be remembered as a kind and generous man, whose contributions to his community will not be easily forgotten. His generous spirit will live on in the Rio Grande Valley, leaving those he loved better for having known him.

Mr. Speaker, South Texas lost a strong community member this month. He embodied the values of diligence, selflessness, and service. He will be sorely missed.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF STEPHANIE BARBER GETER AS SHE RECEIVES THE MEDGAR EVERS AWARD FROM THE BUFFALO BRANCH OF THE NAACP

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 8, 2017

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Stephanie Barber Geter, recipient of The Medgar Evers Award at the NAACP—Buffalo Chapter's Medgar Evers Dinner. Ms. Geter has dedicated much of her life to serving others, especially the people of Western New York. She has left a lasting impact on our community by putting others before herself and combining her skills with compassion to improve the lives of others.

Ms. Geter served as Senior Vice President of Funds Distribution & Community Initiatives at the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County. In this role, she distributed approximately \$25 million annually to agency providers and community partners which played a vital role in community development within Western New York. Ms. Geter's tireless work for the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County has improved the quality of life of countless members of our community, and presented so many individuals with opportunities they would not have had without her.

The extensive background in community service Ms. Geter possesses speaks volumes to her drive to make a positive impact on the world. She has experience working in the legislative service branch of government, neighborhood housing programs and youth job services. Ms. Geter has served diligently on numerous non-profit boards, community and government committees and oversight groups as well.

Currently, Ms. Geter works at Buffalo State College as Director of the Head Start Partnership. As Director, she is a mentor and teacher to Head Start teachers who go on to help children. In addition, Ms. Geter serves as the President of the Hamlin Park Taxpayers Association, Board Chair of Restoring Our Community Coalition, Board Chair of Elim Community Corporation, and is on the Board of the WNY Food Bank. As the Board Chair of Restoring Our Community Coalition, she has used her leadership to revitalize neighborhoods along Humboldt Parkway in Buffalo, NY. Ms. Geter has worked with Elim Community Corporation, a bible-based ministry that offers worship to many in our community. In her role on the Board of the WNY Food Bank, Ms. Geter organized and helped provide services vital to the people of Western New York. The impacts of her work can be seen in many different forms. While Ms. Geter has been involved in many different causes and organizations, one constant is her devotion to people in Western New York.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me the time to recognize the remarkable work Ms. Stephanie Geter has done for the Western New York Community. Ms. Geter has truly dedicated her life to helping the people of Buffalo & Erie County. Stephanie's devotion to serving others is admirable and I would like to congratulate her on receiving the Medgar Evers Award.

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR ROBERT LEE SIMMONS II

HON. MAC THORNBERRY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 8, 2017

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express appreciation for the work of Robert Lee Simmons II, Staff Director of the House Armed Services Committee. True confession—I don't like goodbyes, and I'm not very good at them. So I wrote down a few things I want to say and then will yield to others.

Bob Simmons has been a superb leader of the House Armed Services Committee staff for 12 years, across four chairmen. That longevity and continued confidence in him as chairmen come and go, as Committee members come and go, as the challenges that our military and our country face come and too often stay, is pretty remarkable, especially in the business we are in.

I would say his greatest achievement is that he assembled, led, and inspired an outstanding group of people to give their best for our country through not only changing security challenges, but through changing political environments. And he has always operated in light of the unique responsibilities that the Constitution places on Congress as a separate, independent branch of government. Our system is messy, difficult, usually inefficient—as Churchill said, it “is the worst form of government except for all of the others that have ever been tried.”

Over the years, Bob has spent the hours, incurred the headaches, the time in the car, the frustrations of dealing with knucklehead Members like me with the next great idea. And he has done all of that with patience and a

cheerful disposition—usually. He has made this Committee, and helped make this Congress and this system of government, work. And our nation has benefited.

I believe that there is nothing more noble to which men and women can devote their lives than to the protection of their fellow citizens and the security of our nation. Bob Simmons has devoted his life to that cause, first in industry, then with us, now back to industry. But it has always been the same cause. And the guiding light has always been what's the right thing to do for our country, and for the men and women who serve it.

Everyone who serves in jobs like these does so at some sacrifice to family. And so I want to thank Donna and Rob for sharing Bob with us these 12 years and for understanding the missed anniversaries and birthdays. We were on quite a roll there for a while.

On behalf of the men and women who have been privileged enough to serve in this room at some point over the past 12 years, we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with Bob, for what you have done for us, and for all you have done for that most noble cause.

HONORING CAPTAIN JERRY LYNN TATE

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 8, 2017

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Captain Jerry Lynn Tate for his courageous service to our country. While Captain Tate enjoys his retirement in Mabank, Texas, his exemplary military career leaves a far-reaching legacy of true, American exceptionalism.

Captain Tate joined the United States Army after graduating from the University of Oklahoma's Army ROTC. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in January of 1967.

Upon basic training and studies, Captain Tate was an instructor in the Armor School of Topographic Studies at Fort Knox. He went on to earn his Army Aviator Wings and received 18 Air Medals for meritorious achievement while participating in flight support for combat ground forces throughout the Republic of Vietnam. As a pilot as well as an instructor in the Grumman OV-1 Mohawk, Captain Tate flew 945 hours and 315 missions in combat. He also received both the 1,000 and 2,000 hour plaque from Grumman Aerospace, commemorating his accident-free flying hours. There is no doubt that Captain Tate saved countless lives during his outstanding service to our country.

His acts of bravery were commemorated with many awards and decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal. Upon his release from active duty as an instructor pilot and flight commander at Fort Rucker, Captain Tate went on to have a successful career as a pilot for Delta Air Lines for 33 years.

Humbly, I echo the words of President Ronald Reagan, “We will always remember. We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we will always be free.” And humbly, I offer my sincere gratitude to Captain Jerry Lynn Tate for his service and acts of bravery that allow us the freedoms we enjoy today.